

Giant cable companies should not be permitted to grow larger. Further consolidation in the cable industry is a clear violation of horizontal ownership rules that must be re-established to serve the public interest. In fact, I would be in favor of breaking up these huge media conglomerates and making them more accountable to the FCC and the over-the-air rules about Equal Time.

The concentration of power and control over distribution of media is a growing problem in this country. Though we have more channels available than ever before, they are under the operation of a handful of giant corporations. We already know they are giving us VNR (video news releases) which they present as real

news, but which are truly corporate and government propaganda, without identifying them as such. Do you trust the corporations to actually act in the best interests of the public, even after they've already proven they can't be trusted?

If Comcast and Time Warner are allowed to merge with Adelphia, the two companies will control nearly 50 percent of the national market. This level of concentration in the cable industry will lead to higher consumer rates and lower quality service.

Since passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the “deregulation” of cable, consumers have seen their rates jump an average of 59 percent — with some

areas experiencing even more dramatic increases. Can working people whose incomes do not keep pace with these cable company rate hikes really have access when the rates go beyond the level at which they can afford to buy cable access?

Consider, too, that the more we spend on cable, the less our input is even under consideration by these corporate giants. Who will protect the consumer from the ever-encroaching of the air waves by these huge media corporations? Who is looking out for our interests and the good of the American people?

We are required to buy channels we don't want or need because the cable operators bundle them together and only they get to choose what goes on

the air and what doesn't, but quite often what we get are more of the same kinds of programming, not other viewpoints, not dissenting viewpoints, not local voices. Why does only one religion continue to be represented in cable programming? Where are the other religions being represented on television? Why are there no pagan channels or jewish channels or islam channels? That right there tells you of the inequity visited upon cable customers all over this country. The quality of customer service often reflects the fact that cable television is not a competitive market.

Meanwhile, the cost of cable modem service remains out of reach for many households, holding constant for years

and selectively underserving rural and low-income Americans. The American people are watching the digital divide widen even as the need for access to high-speed networks increases. We are being priced right out of the market, in addition to not finding any programming that addresses the needs of the people (except on public television and cspan - the rare exceptions!)

Cable companies have become less responsive to the needs and requirements of communities. The quality of public accountability in local franchise agreements has declined, as big companies leverage their power to squeeze local governments.

In many communities,

the truly  
independent sources  
of local news,  
information and  
culture come from  
the public channels  
produced at the  
local access  
centers.

Unfortunately, local  
channels lack the  
resources to produce  
the programming that  
citizens want and  
need. In my local  
area, there is no  
local access center  
within 100 miles. We  
are at the mercy of  
corporations, even  
at the movie theatre  
level where movies  
that GKC Cinema,  
Inc. - the  
corporation that  
owned the theatres -  
did not agree with  
were banned from  
being shown. In  
addition, I would  
call your attention  
to the  
right-wing-friendly  
media corporations  
who aired material  
that was one-sided  
against John Kerry  
last fall, just  
before the election,

and would not give him equal time to respond in kind. Cable companies are not, apparently, required to meet the Equal Time standard that over-the-air networks must adhere to. The last thing we need are more corporate-owned cable networks that will completely shut out dissenting viewpoints.

The last thing we need is to reward the anti-competitive actions of cable giants by permitting greater consolidation in ownership, reducing competition, and encouraging more of the same. The possession of lots of money should NOT be the standard we adhere to in terms of decisions about who is allowed to own what, and who gets a voice on the television and who doesn't. In terms of sheer numbers of

people, there are a  
lot more poor people  
than rich people,  
but their majority  
voice and their  
concerns are no  
where heard on  
cable.